

An underwater photograph showing a variety of coral reefs and small fish swimming in the water. The scene is dimly lit, with light filtering through the water, creating a serene and naturalistic atmosphere.

► NATURAL RESOURCE YEAR IN REVIEW

1998

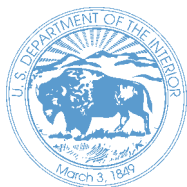
U.S. Department of the Interior • National Park Service

Summarizing and analyzing the year
in natural resource stewardship
and science in the national
park system

► Year at a Glance • A Spectrum of Challenges • NPS Science • Partners in Science
Resource Disturbances • Resource Restoration • New Horizons • Resource Interpretation

Natural Resource Year in Review—1998

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◀ **Designated the “Year of the Ocean”** by the United Nations, 1998 provided an opportunity for the National Park Service to emphasize preservation of marine resources in the national park system (see abalone story on page 12). Additionally, an executive order called for increased protection of coral reefs under federal care, including those in units of the national park system (see reef story on page 51). This reef in Biscayne National Park (Florida) encrusts cannon balls from the 1748 wreck of the British vessel *Fowey* and consists of brain corals, sea plumes, sponges, parrotfish, and many other organisms.

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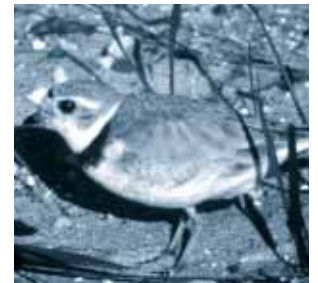
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Legend—The following symbols are used in this report:



—Indicates a story brief or an update of an issue described in a previous edition of Year in Review.

GPRA —Most of the articles in this report relate to NPS mission-oriented goals enumerated in the 1997 NPS Strategic Plan, which was designed to measure progress in fulfilling requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). Those articles that specifically address the long-term GPRA goals related to natural resource condition (goal I: disturbed lands/exotic species; threatened and endangered species; air and water quality; natural resource inventories) and visitor satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation (goal II) are indicated by the GPRA symbol.

▶ YEAR AT A GLANCE

January

- Regional representatives meet to outline initial elements needed in Natural Resource Initiative in response to December 1997 National Leadership Council decisions.
- Third Fundamentals for Natural Resource Management course begins at Albright Training Center.
- NPS strengthens its liaison with USGS Biological Resources Division (BRD) headquarters.
- Pulling Together Initiative awards combined federal and nonfederal grants to six park projects aimed at the control of invasive plant species.

February

- Independent review of mountain goat research and management in Olympic National Park (Washington) planned.
- Colonial Pipeline Corporation pays \$147,000 for resource damage at two parks in the Washington, D.C., area caused by 1993 diesel fuel spill that entered Potomac River.
- Categories for natural resource budget and technical assistance accessed through NPS natural resource “unified call” expand to include services from NPS Natural Resource Program Center and USGS-BRD Species at Risk Program.

March

- Window glass manufacturer withdraws application to build plant near Shenandoah National Park (Virginia), a Class I area under the Clean Air Act, based on concerns over stream acidification and visibility degradation.
- Canon U.S.A., Inc., through National Park Foundation, funds 17 park resource management projects under its Expedition Into The Parks program.

April

- NPS participates in congressional briefing on the threat of exotic and noxious plant species.
- Director announces annual awards for natural resource stewardship.

- Four pilot CESUs recommended.
- Glacier Bay National Park (Alaska) releases environmental assessment of effects of proposed federal regulation on commercial fishing in park waters.
- “Inside Earth,” the newsletter of cave- and karst-related resource management issues, makes initial appearance.
- *Environmental Contaminants Encyclopedia*, summarizing 118 toxic elements, compounds, and products, available on World Wide Web.

May

- Director Stanton forwards outline of proposed Natural Resource Initiative to Secretary Babbitt.
- New training manager for natural resources, Bob Karotko, on duty at Albright Training Center.
- Twenty-one park projects related to mine site reclamation receive monies from the Abandoned Mineral Lands Program, base-funded for the first time in 1998.
- Smoke from fires in Mexico and Central America degrades visibility (1–2 miles) and exceeds EPA standard for ozone and particulate matter in Great Smoky Mountains (Tennessee and North Carolina) and Mammoth Cave (Kentucky) National Parks.

June

- President signs Executive Order 13089, providing for greater protection of coral reefs.
- Pilot project to inventory geologic resources in Colorado parks gets under way.

July

- NPS and several state and private organizations agree on water rights and water-related resources protection in six parks near Little Colorado River in Arizona.
- Staffs from National Interagency Fire Center and Natural Resource Program Center meet to coordinate activities related to planning, air quality, Geographic Information Systems, vegetation mapping, research, and threatened and endangered species.

August

- Lands formerly known as New World Mine, adjacent to Yellowstone, transfer to Gallatin National Forest following two-year, \$65 million federal buyout.
- Revised NPS research and collecting permit goes out for regional review.

September

- National Leadership Council identifies programmatic framework for Natural Resource Initiative action plan; Director Stanton establishes steering committee reporting to Deputy Director Galvin to oversee implementation.
- Director Stanton releases new director's order on wetland protection.
- NPS publishes proposed rule for regulation of personal watercraft in parks.

October

- Congress appropriates \$2.5 million for U.S. Geological Survey program that focuses on water-quality issues in parks.
- National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 becomes law, mandating inventory and monitoring in parks and the development and use of information for park decisions; law also protects information on sensitive resources.
- Exotic species fact book *Invasive Plants Changing the Landscape of America* mailed to parks.
- U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meets in Biscayne National Park (Florida) to coordinate interagency reef protection efforts—mapping and monitoring, research, and conservation programs.
- NPS sends revised regulations for management of National Natural Landmarks Program to Office of Management and Budget.
- Investigator's Annual Report debuts on NPS Intranet, centralizing location for reporting research activities, verifying data, and generating reports.

November

- Natural Resource Information Division issues two-CD set containing 18 years of resource management bulletin *Park Science*.
- NPS agrees to sponsor a total of seven American Indian cooperative education students preparing for careers in natural resource management.
- NPS and Canon U.S.A., Inc., announce second class of Canon Scholars, bringing to seven the total of Ph.D. candidates undertaking park-related research under program; announcement ceremony inaugurates first annual Canon Lecture on Science and the National Parks, presented in 1998 by Dr. Daniel Janzen.

December

- Director circulates letter to superintendents urging them to find ways to implement the Natural Resource Initiative in the parks.
- Yellowstone announces discovery of whirling disease in Yellowstone Lake cutthroat trout.
- Director Stanton delivers commencement address at Southern University, Baton Rouge, inaugurating Urban Recreation Research Center.
- Director Stanton and State of Missouri independently petition Secretary Babbitt to stop mineral leasing on federal lands adjacent to Ozark National Scenic Riverways to protect water and groundwater resources from impacts of lead mining.



NATURAL RESOURCE INITIATIVE GAINS MOMENTUM

Endorsed by the NPS National Leadership Council in 1998, the initiative focuses on 12 areas:

- inventorying resources,
- monitoring to understand resource condition,
- increasing collaboration,
- encouraging outside research,
- integrating natural resources in planning,
- developing professional staffs,
- controlling exotic species,
- protecting native and endangered species,
- abiding by environmental laws,
- expanding air quality improvement efforts,
- caring for water resources and aquatic life, and
- using parks for natural resource education opportunities.

An important first step in the initiative is the request for a budget increase of \$19.8 million in FY 2000. The increase focuses on accelerating natural resource inventories, managing native and exotic species, funding projects under the Natural Resource Preservation Program, increasing geologic expertise for resource protection, implementing the Resource Protection Act to help parks recover from environmental damage, and restoring the California desert parks. Budget increases of similar magnitude are planned for an additional four years. Equally critical is change within the National Park Service that reflects the emphasis on natural resource stewardship and makes gains wherever possible with existing human and fiscal resources.



Sea stacks, Olympic National Park (Washington).

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

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Following publication of *Preserving Nature in the National Parks* (Richard Sellars, September 1997), the National Park Service spent much of 1998 crafting a Natural Resource Initiative that would respond to the implications of the book's message. One implication is that we must add a third area of emphasis—resource management—to the NPS culture to complement our well-established leadership in park development and operations. The challenges of the modern landscape now require this third pillar if parks are to be successfully protected in the 21st century.

After many discussions at all levels, and final deliberation by the National Leadership Council in August, a plan and a five-year budget initiative covering 12 program areas (with an initial request of roughly \$20 million for FY 2000) were agreed to (see sidebar). Developing the details of how best to implement this plan nationally has been challenging, but the concept has been widely supported. The most frequent criticism has been that we are moving too slowly. This year's events reflected both ample evidence of the need to move forward in this area and signs of new emphasis in key areas of need.

One source of evidence indicating our need to emphasize natural resource management was from our pursuit of the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act—GPRA (fondly pronounced “gipra”). In assembling our NPS *Strategic Plan*, we grappled with the need for NPS program activities to be fashioned in such a way that they determine and report measurable outcomes that can be achieved with current funding. After exhaustive efforts to identify currently measurable outcomes related to natural resource management in our parks, we recognized that we are sadly deficient in this area. Anyone who reads the strategic plan will realize that while the NPS mission is in large measure to preserve the resources that visitors come to see, we have little understanding or systematic measurement of how we are performing in the preservation of natural resources in parks. In and of itself, this exposure of the lack of a systematic approach to accumulating, using, and translating an understanding of the resources we manage is a sizable contribution to better park management. We hope that GPRA will continue to focus our attention on the discrepancy between the primary importance of preserving resources and

the relatively small programmatic effort we can currently demonstrate. Recognizing this importance, we indicate articles in this report that relate to the first GPRA goal—preserving park resources—by calling attention to their titles with the following symbol: GPRA. (Articles that relate to the second GPRA goal—providing for public enjoyment and understanding of parks—are also notated in this way.)

One important milestone that compels action in a very sensitive and threatened habitat is Executive Order 13089—Coral Reef Protection—signed by President Clinton on 11 June 1998. Among other things, the National Park Service must revise the general management plans for all coral reef parks by FY 2004, with emphasis on reviewing the current levels of protection and committing to additional protective actions where needed, according to available science. This may necessarily include increased restrictions of activities that are incompatible with long-term sustainability of fish populations and preservation of reef communities.

Perhaps the most exceptional and far-reaching milestone for natural resources in 1998 is passage of the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998, initiated by Senator Craig Thomas of Wyoming and piloted through the turbulent waters of Congress in the fall with the help of the Office of the Secretary and NPS Assistant Director for External Affairs Destry Jarvis. The act includes the mandate for science in parks and park management that has been sought by many supporters and critics of the National Park Service for decades (see the article on page 55).

In the following articles you will also see other areas of progress—strengthening our partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey and academe through the creation of four pilot Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units, Great Smoky Mountain National Park pioneering the first all-taxa biological inventory anywhere, initiating the first Canon Lecture on Science and the National Parks, streamlining our research permitting process to make parks better places for all to do research, and more. Thus, the year was productive and ended on an optimistic note.



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